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Cumberland County

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By Jacob M. Goodyear

Paper read before the Cumberland County Historical Association on Janunry 18, 1951.

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It is a rather interesting commentary on human nature that returning armies released from the rigors of war are prone to organize and band together for other purposes. In all ages and climes the veterans of wars have formulated purposes and aims — in some instances to plan and devise wars of conquest, in others to seize control of the civil government by bullet rather than by ballot, in still other instances to ask the payment of a gratuity or pension from the state, or to win a favored position before the law. To the men of Blue — veterans of the Union Army in the Civil War, however, the preservation of the Union and the cessation of civil strife meant the dedication of energies to the cultivation of friendships and the improvement of society in general. The latter purpose found its best and finest expression in the advancement of patriotic ideals and the principles of good citizenship. Throughout the length and breadth of the land organizations of veterans were formed, each named a post and each with the name of one of the group or of a leading citizen in the locality included in the name. This was the genesis of the Grand Army of the Republic, or the G.A.R. as it has affectionately been called for many years.

In the minds of those of the present generation the natural question arises regarding the character of these posts and their activities. Primarily they were veterans organizations dedicated to the principles of fraternity and patriotism, but with a strong social element running through all that the members did. Regular meetings were held at which the members used ritualistic procedure, indulged in reminiscent remarks and for the evening at least relived in their minds the events of the past. The measure of the standing of any member rested upon his attendance at meetings, his appearance in parades and participation in any other activities.

Frequently a member of a post appeared as a candidate for public office and then it was that party lines seemed to be nonexistant and the public witnessed the spectacle of veterans campaigning for one of their own rather than being controlled by the party label. Twice the office of sheriff was filled by a veteran — Samuel J. Harris of the Shippensburg Post and Jacob M. Goodyear of the Carlisle Post being chosen for that office and not the least element in their political success was the votes of their comrades in the several posts of the county.

Even as Cumberland County was not slow in sending her sons off to the war, so it was that she was among the first in the land to organize posts of the returning veterans. Not in every borough of the county, but in those localities that had the more men in uniform posts were speedily organized. Within the county there were seven chartered — at Newburg, Newville, Shippensburg, Mount Holly Springs, Carlisle, Mechanicsburg, and New Cumberland. It is our purpose to note the salient facts in the life of each of these posts and then set down for the record of history any links between the generation that gave them birth and our own day and age. Already the shadows are falling on some of the records and to recount accurate history is none too easy, but it is the hope that this brief account of each of the several posts will serve to record in tangible form facts that should be preserved.

The period during which the posts of Cumberland County were chartered was the decade between 1880 and 1890 and it was in these years that the influence of their members was felt most effectively in civic and political activities, and in this era the popularity of Memorial Day and its general observance found its finest expression. Patriotic parades and bean soup suppers, the proceeds of the latter helping to finance the posts, were annual community events rather than mere private ventures. One characteristic of all of the posts was that regardless of the attitude of the individual members toward alcoholic beverages or games of chance these were never permitted in the meeting rooms, because there the emphasis was placed upon fraternity and patriotism.

Neither time or space permits more than but a brief recital of the activities and the history of each post, but it is a matter of

record who the respective officers were for the first year, who the charter members were and how many there were of the latter. It is ours to attempt not a comprehensive history, but rather to treat each post as a separate unit and tell its own life story.

Captain Colwell Post No. 201

Captain Colwell Post was mustered into existence at a meeting held in Sipe's Hall on February 24, 1881, and the 489 charter members selected the following officers for the first year:

Commander, Capt. William E. Miller; senior vice-commander, J. L. Meloy; junior vice-commander, P. D. Beckford; surgeon, J. S. Bender, M.D.; quartermaster, J. T. Zug; officer of the day, John G. Bobb; officer of the guard, Capt. J. P. Brindle; sergeant major, William Vance.

Already the families of some of these early officers have died out of the community. For example, the death of A. G. Miller and John R. Miller, both brothers of William E. Miller, marked the end of that line. However, Ruby R. Vale, millionaire attorney of Philadelphia, and Robert B. Vale, veterans newspaper man, sons of Captain Joseph G. Vale, still survive. The Misses Mary and Sarah Bobb, daughters of Colonel John G. Bobb; Mrs. Esther Andrews, daughter of Dr. J. S. Bender, survive and are members of our town today. Robert Vance, son of William Vance, has been employed at the Carlisle Shoe Factory for many years, and a brother John served with distinction in World War I. Many can recall the little store on North Hanover Street operated by "Jack" Humer, a veteran himself, who was the son of J. S. Humer. From among the many descendants of the charter members there are many we respect today who must be mentioned: John Ruggles, the son of John T. Ruggles; Mrs. Lenore Embick Flower, Dr. Milton E. Flower, James E. Flower, Esq., and Lieut. Gen. Stanley Dunbar Embick, the daughter, grandsons and son of Milton A. Embick; the late Charles A. Shambaugh, Esq., son of Levi T. Shambaugh; the late Anna Goodyear, daughter of B. K. Goodyear; and Mrs. Mary Haverstick, the widow of Joseph B. Haverstick, the first adjutant of the post, who resided on South Hanover Street until she attained an advanced age. Today descendants of these charter members move in every walk of life and it is noteworthy that seven such are members of the board of directors of the Hamilton Library; namely, Dr. Milton E. Flower, Marcus A. McKnight, Samuel M. Goodyear and Jacob M. Goodyear, Allan D. Thompson, D. Wilson Thompson and Merkel Landis.

One very unusual event occurred in the very first year of the life of this post. On July 1, 1881, the members and their wives and family had an excursion and sightseeing trip to the Luray Cavern in Virginia. Knowing what date had been arranged for the trip, a letter was sent from the post here to the authorities in Virginia asking that as many Confederate veterans as possible assemble to greet the visitors from Carlisle and take them by the hand.

James S. Colwell, the man in whose honor this post was named, was a member of Company A, 7th Pennsylvania Reserve Corps. He was born near Shippensburg on August 19, 1813, and after his graduation from Princeton in 1839 read law in the office of William Biddle, Esq. He practiced law until he entered the army on April 21, 1861, with the rank of captain and participated in the Peninsular Campaign of 1862 and the Battle of South Mountain. He was killed in action at Antietam on September 17, 1862.

The activities of the post cannot be recited or recounted in detail, but omission may not be made of the names of the men who served as commander during the years of its history. These included, in addition to Capt. William E. Miller, Joseph B. Haverstick, Capt. Joseph G. Vale, B. K. Goodyear, W. H. Longsdorf, Capt. J. P. Brindle, Nathan J. Adams, L. S. Eisenhouer and Capt. John I. Faller.

But the one original officer of Captain Colwell Post who has left possibly the most lasting mark upon Carlisle is Capt. J. P. Brindle, the officer of the guard. When with the passage of years and the ravages of time no more veterans

were alive to meet and perform patriotic chores, then the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War was organized to carry on this highly important work and the camp formed at Carlisle was named in honor of Capt. Brindle and what his life had represented. He was a native to the vicinity of Carlisle Springs, born April 8, 1825, and enlisted on October 3, 1862, in Company G, 84th Regiment. He served on 27 battlefields including Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Cold Harbor, Petersburg, Spottsylvania and the Wilderness Campaign and was unscathed, but typhoid fever laid him low before Petersburg and on July 16, 1864, he was discharged because of disability, but before this he had moved through successive grades to that of captain. After the war, like Sheriff Harris and Sheriff Goodyear he found political success and served for three years as prothonotary of the court of common pleas, later serving three more years as deputy prothonotary. He was the father of the late D. Edward Brindle, contractor and builder, and Albert N. Brindle, also a builder, and the grandfather of Mrs. Charles Carl, of Camp Hill, and Mrs. Urie D. Lutz, of Carlisle. His accomplishments after the war included also two terms as justice of the peace, serving as a notary public for many years and being commander of the post for six years.

Joshua W. Sharp Post No. 371

The middle of the nineteenth century found the Sharp family one of the largest land owning groups in the vicinty of Newville. It was not that they were farmers, but rather that they were the landlords of hundreds of acres of the finest land in the county. This being true, it was only natural that when one of this family returned from the Civil War that his prominence led to the post at Newville being named in his honor by the 96 men who signed the charter.

Officers for the first year were elected as follows, to serve from date of organization on March 24, 1888:

Commander, D. W. Tobuler; senior vice-commander, John P. Toise; junior vice-commander, B. L. Shullenberger; adjutant, Stacy G. Glouser; quartermaster, Jacob Weast; officer of the day, William B. Over; sergeant major, Samuel Gephart; quartermaster sergeant, William H. Hendig.

It is interesting to note that Joshua Sharp, for whom the post was named, while upon a tour of the world, was stricken ill in Jappa, where he died and was buried. A monument to his memory stands in the cemetery at Newville, however. Joshua Sharp never married and the surviving members of his family include Henrietta Sharp, of Newville, and several other collateral heirs, but the direct family line died with the old veteran. Many of the families represented in the roster of original officers of the Sharp Post have scattered abroad or died, so that only a few of the descendants may be mentioned. However, Lucy Hays and her late sister, Mrs. Belle McKinney Swope, were representative members of families that were active in the life of the post. Nor may Theodore Weast, son of Jacob Weast, be omitted from any list of creditable descendants of the men of Blue.

B. F. Eisenberger Post No. 462

Benjamin F. Eisenberger was born in Cumberland County and enlisted as a private at Philadelphia in Company "I", 28th Infantry on January 23, 1864 when he was only nineteen years of age. He was wounded on June 16, 1864 at the battle of Lost Mountain, Georgia, in the advance upon Atlanta. The next day he died and presumably was buried in Georgia in a soldiers' cemetery. H. D. Eisenberger appears as a charter member of Post No. 462 at New Cumberland and it is reasonable to conclude that B. F. Eisenberger was from that locality because the Post was named in his honor. Only 36 names appear on the charter of this Post, but the late J. D. Hemminger lists 96 charter members and it is thought that as frequently was the case the charter was opened to admit members after the Post was organized.

The officers for the first year were as follows:

Commander, J. P. Orr, M.D.; senior vice-commander, W. H. Davis; junior vice-commander, H. D. Eis-

enberger; surgeon, Elias F. Garman; chaplain, John W. Feight; quartermaster, Jesse Oren; officer of the day, John Kirk.

There have been many descendants of the first officers and members to win distinction in life, some of whom are known to many of us. Paul Oren, son of Jesse Oren who was the first Quartermaster, was a successful attorney in Detroit and now resides retired at Fort Lauderdale, Florida; Jesse Oren, another son, for 48 years has been a civilian employee of the U. S. Navy as an inspector of materials; James Feight, formerly a member of the Cumberland County Bar, is now a member of the firm of Lewis and Bockius in Philadelphia; the first Commander of this post, Dr. J. P. Orr, practiced in New Cumberland for years until he sold his practice and moved away, but the borough records show a resolution thanking him for his services as a member of the Board of Health; Jesse Oren was a retail coal merchant and a member of Oren and Company, manufacturers of oak and hickory spokes; Chaplain John W. Feight was one of three owners of Shoop, Sadler and Feight Lumber Company and the grandfather of the attorney previously mentioned; Elias F. Garman, the first surgeon, was later postmaster at Lemoyne; Jesse Oren was at one time the postmaster at New Cumberland. Nor must it be omitted that a grandfather of our own Mrs. Lyman G. Hertzler and also Mrs. Roberta Gracey, of New Cumberland was Robert M. Kline, one of the charter members. He was a partner in the retail furniture store of Kline and Buttorff, which was the business from which the present store of Buttorff and Company developed. And so we could go on and on in every field of activity in the lower end of the county, and there would be discovered the work and influence of these veterans of the Civil War and their descendants. Long enough before the growth of population and business produced by the 20th century they labored each in his own vineyard to advance the best interest of their respective neighborhoods and to turn the wheels of social and civic progress.

Col. H. I. Zinn Post No. 415

When veterans residing in and near the Borough of Mechanicsburg organized their Post on March 4, 1884, they named it in honor of Colonel H. I. Zinn, a resident of that borough who was the first from that community to be killed in action and they chose William Penn Lloyd, a leading member of the Cumberland County Bar as commander for the first year. The other initial officers were as follows:

Senior vice-commander, H. S. Mohler; junior vice-commander, A. C. Koser; adjutant, L. F. Zollinger; surgeon, E. B. Brandt, M.D.; chaplain, F. K. Ployer; quartermaster, S. B. King; officer of the day, D. A. Hauck; officer of the guard, Aaron F. Stahl; sergeant major, W. D. Blackburn; quartermaster sergeant, E. N. Musser, M.D.; guard, Adam Down.

Certainly these officers represented a cross-section of the community because they were drawn from all walks of life. William Penn Lloyd had his law office, H. S. Mohler was the justice of the peace, A. C. Koser was a butcher, both Dr. Brandt and Dr. Musser were practicing physicians, S. B. King owned and operated a sash and door factory, L. F. Zollinger was a coachmaker, D. A. Hauck was a tinsmith, W. D. Blackburn published a newspaper and Samuel R. Coover was a retired Shepherdstown merchant who had removed to Mechanicsburg. The late George E. Lloyd, former district attorney and for years prominent as a member of the bar and prominent in civic and war financing activities, was a son of William Penn Lloyd and Mrs. Samuel Sunday, of Mechanicsburg, the mother of a son soon to be admitted to the bar to carry on the tradition of his great-grandfather, is a granddaughter; Mrs. Byron Schroeder is a daughter of A. C. Koser and her daughter now is clerk in the office of the borough manager, while the Mohler Insurance Agency is conducted by Paul Mohler, grandson of H. S. Mohler. Many of the families represented by the first officers of the post have disappeared from the life of Mechanicsburg, but

among the survivors who may not be omitted are Margaret Blackburn, daughter of W. D. Blackburn; Mrs. Mabel Nailor, of Camp Hill, the daughter of Samuel R. Coover, and Mrs. Myrtle Millusin, the daughter of David Mohler.

A few of the friends of these old veterans still survive and they delight to narrate how old Dr. Musser, at the Battle of Gettysburg, was stationed in a field hospital in an old barn along the Chambersburg Pike close to the scene of the death of General Reynolds, where he labored alone and almost unaided with the wounded for many days.

Corporal McClean Post No. 423

Newspaper files tell the story of the organization of the Post at Shippensburg, and that the initial meeting was held in the Valley Fire Company Hall on Friday, March 28, 1884. At this meeting it was decided to name the Post "Corporal McLean Post" and the officers for the first year were selected as follows:

Commander — Martin G. Hale; senior vice commander — William Baughman; junior vice commander — John Shugars; quartermaster — John E. Geeseman; surgeon — James W. Kenyon; officer of the day—Rev. J. M. Carvell; quartermaster sergeant — S. J. Harris; adjutant — M. S. Taylor.

The actual mustering in of the Post took place on April 7, 1884, and at this meeting was held in Odd Fellow's Hall in the Reddig Building. Thirty-nine charter members were enrolled and it is related that at the conclusion of this meeting the comrades joined in singing an old army song entitled "Bean Soup."

It is an interesting commentary to note the part that the charter members of this Post and their descendants have taken in the business lift of Shippensburg and particularly in the affairs of the First National Bank. Corporal George J. McLean, for whom the Post was named, was the only brother of James E. McLean, the latter being the grandfather of James E. McLean, the present Trust Officer and assistant cashier of the bank; Martin G. Hale, the first Post Commander was the great-grandfather of Lee M. Hale, Jr., whose father was cashier of that bank for many years (Lee M. Hale, Jr., having served with distinction in World War II); John E. Geeseman was also at one time the cashier of that bank; Corporal McLean, for whom the Post was named, originally was enrolled in Captain Kelso's Company, which was mustered in at Harrisburg on August 10, 1852, and which later became Company "D" of the 130th Regiment. He was wounded at the battle of Fredericksburg on December 13, 1862, and died on the 21st of that month, being buried at Spring Hill Cemetery at Shippensburg.

Descendants of these first officers survive in the person of William Angle, a retired coal merchant, who is of the family of William Baughman; S. L. Daihl, public school teacher, who is a grandson of David F. Daihl; and Galen Glenn Gates, retired merchant, and Mrs. Robert S. Meck, of Camp Hill, both grandchildren of S. J. Harris. Of the original officers James W. Kenyon was in the newspaper business in Shippensburg for years, and it is interesting to note that Rev. J. M. Carvell, elected officer of the day for the first year, failed to attend the second meeting with the result he was removed from office and replaced by another veteran.

Samuel J. Harris, later to become sheriff of the county, was a blacksmith and inventor of farm machinery, and Martin S. Taylor, the first adjutant of the Post, was a school teacher in Shippensburg. He was a cousin of Roy M. Taylor, graduate of Dickinson College, and now secretary of the Lurgan Mutual Fire Insurance Company. He was another of the war's casualties, having lost an arm in the hostilities.

Kennedy Post No. 490

The meeting to organize a post at Mount Holly Springs was called by Joseph Haverstick, of Carlisle, who was the mustering officer of the post there and at this first meeting, which was held in the Odd Fellow's Hall a committee was present from Carlisle to assist in the organization of the new post. This committee was composed of Comrades William E. Miller, William Leppert, Jacob M.

Goodyear, Capt. Joseph G. Vale and J. C. Croffert, the latter being of Post No. 405 at Mechanicsburg. Years previous to this organization meeting William Kennedy had come to Mount Holly Springs from Grand Rapids, Mich., to be employed in the paper mill. He resided in a stone house located near to the upper mill and was a well known and highly regarded veteran. By common consent his name was given to the new post and with the election of Henry Mullet as the commander for the first year Kennedy Post No. 490, G.A.R., came into being with 87 active members upon its rolls. In 1923 it was disbanded, but not until descendants of the charter members had gained prominence in their own right. Today many recall the late Percy Harman and know personally Mrs. J. Raymond Snyder and Eli Toner, all of whom were children or grandchildren of members of the Kennedy Post. Nor must one of these members be forgotten — he who removed to Carlisle but never removed his post membership and who won the distinction of being the last veteran to die in Carlisle. I refer to James K. Snyder, the grand old man of many Memorial Day parades.

Greacy Post No. 630

David Greacy, member of Company "D" 29th Pennsylvania Infantry, was honored by his friends and neighbors at Newburg by having the post there named in his honor. His most distinguished descendant is Dr. George F. Greacy, the well known specialist in Harrisburg, who is a nephew. This post was mustered into service on May 19, 1895, and the officers for the first year were as follows:

Commander, J. F. McClay; adjutant, Samuel Humer; quartermaster, Charles G. Klein.

In 1926 Samuel S. Wylie, well known Presbyterian minister, was elected commander and for 16 years he continued in that position, or until the post disbanded. Later when he removed to Philadelphia, a large modern church ediface in that city was named in his honor. Today few of the families of the members of this post remain, but Mrs. Eva Wylie Polk, of Shippensburg, recalls the meetings of these veterans and the activity of her father in them.

But time brings its changes and no more do the veterans of Bull Run, Shiloh, Antietam or Gettysburg appear in parades to inspire our actions or tug at our heartstrings — truly the poet has said:

"On Fame's eternal camping ground their silent cots are spread:
"While Glory marks with solemn tread the bivouac of the dead."

They have been mustered in, but not into posts, for the last time and with their passing the post themselves have become history. They served a day and generation well and left their mark on thousands of communities, but the reason for their existence no longer exists and they themselves have become history. Today the permanence of Memorial Day as a sacred occasion and the traditional bean soup suppers conducted annually by the Sons of Union Veterans are themselves the mute testimony to the influence they exerted at one time. And as we look backward upon these G.A.R. posts, perchance we should cast our eyes ahead to the time when "men shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks and shall learn of war no more." Or shall we not as we think of the past rededicate ourselves to the unfinished task remaining before us, so that government of the people, by the people and for the people shall not perish from the earth.

Acknowledgement is made for valuable assistance rendered in the preparation of this paper by the following:—

Mrs. Eva W. Polk, Shippensburg; Richard H. Wolfrom, Esq., Shippensburg; Dr. George F. Greacy, Harrisburg; Hon. James L. Young, Mechanicsburg; George W. Keller, Mount Holly Springs; Jay I. White, Carlisle, and George H. Reiff, New Cumberland.

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